Website Script

**Home**

Songs of Colonization is a project that analyzes a select corpus of US-American and German South-West African “folk songs” that highlight collective ideas of nationalism and colonialism during the late 19th and early 20th century. After selecting our songs, our team analyzed them using XML technologies to produce this website and the data presented on it.

This project was completed during our semester-long Computational Methods in Humanities Course at the University of Pittsburgh by Lilly Forrest, Evan Ressel, and Maja Lynn. Our thanks to our professors David Birnbaum, James Pickett, and UTA Mitchell Luckman for all of their guidance.

* Lilly, Evan, Maja

**About**

In this project, we seek to explore how nationalism is expressed through the colonial narrative of “folk songs” in the American West and German Southwest Afrika, present-day Namibia. Our team analyzed a corpus of texts to understand the expression of collective colonial identity in both Germany and the US, and how those contexts may be related. We determined that songs would be particularly effective in communicating the collective ideas of these groups because they are composed for the “common man”. Soldiers and settlers alike were supposed to identify with these songs, and the songs themselves were meant to solidify and encourage their concepts of national identity.

One of the main goals in analyzing these songs is understanding what these collective ideas are and how they may translate to the justification of violence. In many of the songs, you might notice derogatory, violent, or negative language surrounding the cultures that were native to the land being colonized. Genocide is part of the history of colonization in both the US and German South-west Africa. Can songs offer us an insight into the mentality and hatred that supported and encouraged these inhuman acts of violence? Can we see expressions of nationalism that promote an “us-vs-them” mentality that laid the seeds of racism, xenophobia and eventually acts of genocide? Go to our historical context tab to learn more about this, and the relationship between the American West and the German Southwest.

Through our research, we determined that colonization’s main tenets include possession of land, resources, bodies, and labor based upon concepts of racial/ethnic superiority that are driven by a love of country, unity and the “us vs. them” mentality. When analyzing our texts, we decided to search for five main themes: homeland, violence, national unity, possession, and other significant acts. Within these main categories, we evaluated if song lyrics were instances of, for example, patriotism or xenophobia. We also made note of whether these statements had positive or negative inflections. Through collecting data based on the metrics we choose to categorize, we hope to identify patterns and to compare types of nationalism that American and German colonizers expressed.

You can read about this and our analysis under the “results” and “conclusions” pages.

\*should I put the page names in italics or quotes?\*

\*Nope but we can link to them!\*

\*will complete later

**Historical Context:**

* Americans were colonizing a continuous stretch of land
* Instances of Genocide in North America are inconsistent (not every native group were victims of genocide, and there was not one procedure that all colonizers followed)
* Westward expansion and colonization took place over many centuries in the US
* American songs are folk songs. (look into legends and the origin of these songs)
* The US is founded in 1776, a new nation was formed out of people from “diverse” backgrounds
* Germans were colonizing a country far away, and vastly different from their own
* German nation state was created in 1871, formed by groups of people who had long history of occupying this land. Important to create a new identity that would bring people together and make them take pride in Germany
* Trend to strengthen national unity was to glorify medieval Germany- using stories of nights and Valhalla (think pantheon for norse gods that honors German warriors and nights)
  + Ie The Ring of the Nibelung, an extremely famous four-part opera written by Wagner (15 hours in total) about these Norse myths premiered in 1876
  + Resurgence of ballads, which had been popular in medieval times(ill get a more accurate date, but think like 1200 and 16th century peasant protest songs), expressing nationalism for German
* Germany began colonizing late, because they had not been a state before – formally took over Namibia in 1884 after the European “scramble for Africa”
  + Long before this, they had been idealizing America West
* “nation states” are all about ethnic identity (vs US which is more about white Europeans vs poc)
* Lost all colonial land in 1919 after WW1, after just roughly 40 years as a colonial power
* Both believe it is there right to take land away from native people
* Both want land to demonstrate power, and gain resources
* Both romanticize the landscape of the homeland, and “cowboy motifs” like riding and hunting (this is *not* the focus of our data collection, because it would take to long, but I still think it might be interesting to point these (fairly obvious) themes out in our analysis)

**\***will complete later

**Texts**

* American Songs

The songs that make up this Corpus were all selected from *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, which was first published in November, 2010.*.* We choose this source because it was easily accessible and was already digitalized on the Project Guttenberg site. We selected songs whose content dealt directly with either expansion and possession of land or with settlers’ relationships with native peoples. You will notice that this corpus is significantly larger than the German songs, this is due to multiple historical and practical reasons. First, we had a much easier time finding access to American folk songs online. Due to the time and resource restrictions of this project, we embraced this disparity and went forward with a greater amount of American songs. The American period of expansion was also much longer and has been celebrated in popular culture to this day. This accounts for a greater public interest in these songs, which likely contributed to higher rates of publication and circulation.

* German Songs (English)
* German Songs (German)

\*OR\*What format is better?

If we have an “about the corpus” section

Our corpus is limited to songs we found in research written by colonizers specifically about the land that they were colonizing. In the case of the German content, this limited our options because it was difficult to find songs specifically about Southwest Africa. We decided to select a small amount of songs that we were able to find through our university’s library resources in order to more closely analyze this complex theme. We chose to manually mark up our corpus because of the ambiguous nature of the content, which given our time constraints was only possible with a smaller corpus.

**Results**

The results we gathered are based on percentages of elements and their relevant attributes, rather than raw counts. This was done to allow for the most accurate comparison of the songs, as the American corpus is much larger than the German corpus.

**Conclusions**

1. **Violence**

We examined depictions of violence between groups of people within the songs as a way to understand how the settlers and soldiers viewed acts of violence, in hopes that it would give us insight into their perspective and how it connects to their ideas about nationalism and their claim to the land they occupied. Many instances of violence were committed upon animals, but this was also interesting to us as it reveals how they perceived the land’s resources. The German songs overall had less violence than the American songs, and that violence more often was ambiguous on which group either the perpetrator or victim belonged to. We believe this might be because they were engaging in formalized, controlled military violence. We know that they raided villages, fought in wars, and committed genocide but because the violence took place in a military context, their relationship to it was likely very different than for settlers who embraced and took pride in the idea of lawless violence.

(did they see themselves more often as defernders than perpetrators?

1. **Xenophobia**

We coded for instances of xenophobia when native people were directly mentioned in the songs in derogatory ways or hateful contexts. Although there were many mentions of native people in the American songs, the overall percentages showed that there were more instances of xenophobia in the German songs. We think that this could be due to geographical contexts. The American settlers were no doubt highly xenophobic and racist and often acted on these feelings, but why would it be less of a focus in their songs? Perhaps the Germans were more focused on this element because they were part of a continuous empire. Germany was separated by thousands of miles of land and oceans. This was also a time when more formalized theories on race and racial hierarchies became more prevalent. The Germans even inflicted medical experimentation on the native peoples and sent their body parts to Europe for eugenics research. Both groups made xenophobia, the fear and hatred of the other, a defining aspect of their identity. However, perhaps the Germans were more focused on this difference, and perhaps it served them more to spread the ideas of xenophobia in the specific times and contexts of the songs we selected.

1. **National Unity**

We examined national unity in the songs within the contexts of brotherhood, loyalty, pride, patriotism, and solidarity. We found that there was a greater expression of national unity in the German songs and that these expressions were more centered around loyalty whereas the American songs had a stronger focus on brotherhood and solidarity. We believe that this is once again indicative of the political and social contexts of an overseas versus a continuous empire. We also think this is indicative of the fact that Germans had a stronger connection to Germany and the fatherland whereas the Americans were simply connected through their interactions with other settlers. The Germans were serving in an army that required loyalty and reverence to the empire. The same thing was not required of Americans, as many of them choose to band together in and form communities.

1. **Homeland with stacked element of mood**

We coded for mentions of homeland after noticing several references to both the new home and the country or place of origin of the settlers. When examining homeland, we wanted to see if references to homeland had positive, negative or ambiguous connotations to get a better sense of what settlers’ connection to the land was like. We found that the mentions of homeland in the American Songs tended to be more negative, but both groups had around the same percentage of positive mentions. Overall, you may notice that many songs talk about the harsh conditions of the land, but when they directly reference the homeland, the depictions are overwhelmingly positive. We see many examples where they say that they love the home despite how harsh it is and have a sense of pride surrounding it. The fact that positive depictions of the homeland are in the majority tells us that settlers and colonial soldiers had an emotional connection to the land and saw it as their own.

1. **Possession**

When coding for possession, we between land, people, resources, and labor. Our results show that in both German and American contexts, land and resource possession was by far the most mentioned. We know that historically all four categories were common, especially in German Southwest Africa but we can only speculate as to why possession of people and labor were not mentioned in songs. Perhaps they did not fit into the heroic narrative, or maybe there are more songs not in our corpus with different themes that do mention these circumstances.

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**Belonging (total):**

* none for Germans , more for Americans, direct connection vs overseas

**Longing (total):**

* We took the total instances of “longing” and “nostalgia” from every element and grouped them together to find the total percentage
* 2.5, 2.2 shows common romanticism of nation (idealistic) they both view the land in an idealistic way, which in itself is a form